

Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-11 L-03 NSAE-00

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R 180627Z JUL 74

FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5157

INFO SECDEF WASHDC

JCS

13TH ADVON UDORN

USSAG NKP

AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI

AMCONSUL UDORN

AMCONSUL SONGKHLA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BANGKOK 11629

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, MARR, MASS, EAID, ETRD, TH,

SUBJ: FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIALS EXPRESS RESENTMENT ABOUT
THAI/US RELATIONSHIP

SUMMARY: FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIALS MANIFESTED UNCERTAINTY ABOUT THE FUTURE STABILITY AND SECURITY OF ASIA, AND DEEP SEATED RESENTMENT TOWARD THE US, IN A ROUND TABLE DISCUSSION WITH PROFESSOR FRANK TRAGER AT WHICH EMBASSY POLITICAL OFFICERS WERE PRESENT. PRACHA KHUNAKASEM, DIRECTOR GENERAL FOR INFORMATION, AND A LONG TIME PERSONAL FRIEND OF DR. TRAGER, LED THE ATTACK, SUPPORTED CLOSELY BY THAI AMBASSADOR TO WASHINGTON ANAN PANYARACHUN. THIS MESSAGE CONTAINS CLEAR EVIDENCES OF CHANGING THAI ATTITUDES WHICH WE HOPE WASHINGTON WILL NOTE AND BEAR IN MIND, SINCE THEY COULD HAVE SERIOUS IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE U.S.POLICIES AND ACTIVITIES IN THIS AREA. IF THE SENTIMENTS EXPRESSED TO DR. TRAGER GROW AND TAKE ROOT, THE RTG SUSPENSION OF THE P-3 SURVEILLANCE FLIGHTS MAY BE JUST THE BEGINNING OF A LONG SERIES OF RTG
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CURTAILMENTS OF US ACTIVITIES IN ORDER TO RIGHT THE PER-

CEIVED IMBALANCE BETWEEN WHAT THAILAND IS OFFERING US
AND WHAT IT IS RECEIVING IN RETURN. END SUMMARY.

1. ON JULY 15, DR. FRANK TRAGER, NYU PROFESSOR ON
SOUTHEAST ASIA AND LONG-TIME FRIEND OF AMBASSADOR
KINTNER, MET INFORMALLY WITH MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
OFFICIALS TO DISCUSS REGIONAL DEVELOPMENTS. AMONG THE
THAI PRESENT WAS DR. PRACHA KHUNAKASEM, DIRECTOR GENERAL
OF THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS (MFA) INFORMATION
DEPARTMENT, AND ALSO A LONG-TIME FRIEND OF PROFESSOR
TRAGER; AMBASSADOR ANAN (LIKEWISE A FRIEND OF MANY YEARS);
ASA SARASIN, DIRECTOR OF POLICY AND PLANNING; MEMBERS OF THE
POLICY AND PLANNING STAFF; AND A KEY DIVISION CHIEF. PRACHA,
WHO TOOK THE LEAD IN THE DISCUSSION, IS WESTERN EDUCATED AND HAS
A STRONG EMOTIONAL ATTACHMENT TO THE UNITED STATES. YET REMARKS
AT THIS MEETING REVEAL A GROWING FEELING OF RESENTMENT
TOWARD AMERICA AMONG MAY RESPONSIBLE YOUNGER THOUGH
INFLUENTIAL THAI OFFICIALS.

2. THE TWO AND ONE HALF HOUR SESSION BEGAN WITH A PRESENTA-
TION OF VIEWS BY PROFESSOR TRAGER ON DEVELOPMENTS IN THIS
REGION AND U.S. FOREIGN POLICY. WE WILL NOT ATTEMPT TO SUMMA-
RIZE OR RECORD TRAGER'S EXCELLENT COMMENTS BUT FOCUS ON THAI
ATTITUDES AND STATEMENTS. PRACHA AND HIS COLLEAGUES BITTERLY
ASSAILED THE U.S., ACCUSING IT OF HAVING ERODED THE SECURITY AND
STABILITY OF SOUTHEAST ASIA AND OF BEING AN UNRELIABLE ALLY TO
THAILAND DURING THIS PERIOD OF INCREASING UNCERTAINTY AND
PERHAPS DANGER. SPECIFICALLY THEY WERE CONCERNED ABOUT THE UN-
ABATED HOSTILITY OF HANOI, THE APPARENT ASCENDANCY OF THE PATHET
LAO FACTIONS IN LAOS, AND THE DISTURBING CONFLICT SITUATION IN
CAMBODIA.

3. PRACHA SAID THAT PRSIDENT NIXON'S TRIP TO PEKING HAD
BEGUN AN EROSION OF THE PREVIOUS STATUS QUO WHICH AFFECTED
NEARLY ALL THE COUNTRIES OF SOUTHEAST ASIA. IN ADDITION,
AMERICA'S VIETNAM TRAUMA HAD CREATED A PALPABLE
DISINCLINATION, ESPECIALLY IN CONGRESS, TO HAVE ANYTHING
TO DO WITH ASIA. HE SAID AMERICA NEVER SHOULD HAVE
GOTTEN INVOLVED IN VIETNAM IF IT DID NOT PLAN TO WIN
SINCE HALF MEASURES WERE WORSE THAN NONE. THE SEATO
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ALLIANCE NOW APPEARS INCREASINGLY ANACHRONISTIC IN LIGHT
OF US INABILITY--OR LACK OF WILL--TO HONOR ITS COMIT-
MENTS. THUS THE US STANDS ACCUSED OF BOTH INDUCING THE
NEWLY UNCERTAIN SITUATION AND FAILING TO DO ITS PART
TO HELP ASIAN COUNTRIES MEET THE CHALLENGES THE NEW
SITUATION PRESENTS.

4. PRACHA ACCUSED US OF FAILING TO DO WHAT THAILAND BELIEVED

HE HAD COMMITTED OURSELVES TO DO IN THE 1960S. IN PARTICULAR, HE SAID US MILITARY ASSISTANCE HAD FAILED TO CREATE A SELF-RELIANT THAI MILITARY ESTABLISHMENT BUT HAD INSTEAD SADDLED THAILAND WITH A HIGHLY MECHANIZED AND SOPHISTICATED ARSENAL, TOTALLY DEPENDENT ON CONTINUED US SUPPLIES AND SPARE PARTS, AND ONE BEYOND THAILAND'S ABILITY TO SUPPORT BY ITSELF. PRACHA AND OTHERS IN THE ROOM EXPRESSED FRUSTRATION THAT THAILAND HAD UNRESERVEDLY CAST ITS LOT WITH AMERICA FOR THE PAST 20 YEARS, AND WAS NOW FACING REATER THREATS TO ITS NATIONAL SECURITY WITH A LESSENERED CAPABILITY TO DEFEND ITSELF. PRACHA SAID THAT THAILAND USED TO HAVE AN INDIGENOUS ARMAMENT INDUSTRY BUT THAT US MILITARY AID HAD ALMOST PUT IT OUT OF BUSINESS. (TRAGER ANSWERED THAT THE COULD NOT BELIEVE THAT THE US WOULD HAVE DENIED THAILAND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A SELF-SUFFICIENT MILITARY MACHINE IF THAT WERE WHAT THAILAND HAD ASKED FOR CONSISTENTLY DURING THE PAST 20 YEARS.)

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INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-11 L-03 NSAE-00

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AMCONSUL DURON

AMCONSUL SONGKHLA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 BANGKOK 11629

5. BOTH PRACHA AND ANAN QUESTIONED SHARPLY WHAT THAILAND WAS ACHIEVING THROUGH ITS ALLIANCE WITH THE U.S. BESIDES AN INCREASED THREAT TO ITS INDEPENDENCE AND A LESSENERED CAPABILITY TO DEFEND ITSELF. THEY COMPARED THE BENEFITS PRESENTLY ACCRUING TO THAILAND, A CLOSE AND LONG-TIME ALLY, UNFAVORABLY WITH THOSE EGYPT AND YUGOSLAVIA ARE CURRENTLY RECEIVING. ONE OFFICIAL WENT SO FAR AS TO SUGGEST THAT, IF THE US HAS NOTHING MUCH TO OFFER THAILAND, IT SHOULD CONSIDER PACKING UP AND GOING HOME.

6. COMMENT: DOCUMENTING THIS CONVERSATION BY CABLE IS NOT INTENDED TO SIGNIFY THAT THE RTG MAY SOON ASK FOR A PRECIPITIOUS US MILITARY WITHDRAWAL. TOP RTG OFFICIALS WHO STILL MAKE THE KEY DECISIONS HAVE REPEATEDLY ASSURED US THAT THEY DO NOT WANT AN ABRUPT WITHDRAWAL OF US MILITARY FORCES, BUT WANT OUR REDUCTIONS TO RELATE TO A REDUCED THREAT AND INCREASED STABILITY IN THE AREA. TWO THINGS, HOWEVER, SHOULD BE NOTED WITH GREAT CARE: CONFIDENTIAL

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MANY OF THE REACTIONS EXPRESSED IN THIS MEETING WITH DR. TRAGER IMPLY STRONGLY RESENTMENTS WHICH STEM FROM THAILAND'S INCREASED SENSE OF BEING CUT LOOSE WITHOUT ADEQUATE GUARANTEES FOR THE FUTURE; SENIOR RTG OFFICIALS MAY YET PROVE EQUALLY PRONE TO THESE RESENTMENTS. SECONDLY, THE YOUNGER OFFICIALS WHO PARTICIPATED IN THIS MEETING ARE RECEIVING GREATER RESPONSIBILITY AND ACHIEVING INCREASING INFLUENCE ON TOP RTG DECISION-MAKERS. WE MUST THEREFORE BEAR IN MIND THAT THAI ATTITUDES AND PERSPECTIVES TOWARD THE U.S. MAY BE CHANGING IN THE QUARTERS THAT COUNT.

7. THIS PROCESS OF CHANGE IS STILL NASCIENT ENOUGH THAT WE CAN STILL SHAPE AND INFLUENCE IT THROUGH OUR POLICIES AND ACTIONS. THE THANOM-PRAPHAT GOVERNMENT DID LITTLE TO PERSUADE OFFICIALS OF THE RTT AND THAI SOCIETY IN GENERAL OUR CONTINUED MILITARY PRESENCE AND ACTIVITIES HERE REDOUND TO THAILAND'S BENEFIT. WE ARE WORKING TO CONVINCE THAI OF THE VALUE OF THE THAI-US RELATIONSHIP, BUT DO FIND OUR TASK COMPLICATED BY DECLINING ASSISTANCE AND AN INABILITY TO DISCUSS DEFINITELY US PLANS AND POLICIES WHICH MIGHT INVOLVE THAILAND IN THE FUTURE. OUR RELATIONS WITH THE THAI COULD CONTINUE TO BE OF GREAT IMPORTANCE IF WE WISH TO USE THAILAND PROPORTIONATELY MORE FOR MILITARY AND INTELLIGENCE PURPOSES RELATED TO THE INDIAN OCEAN OR OTHER AREAS. WE CANNOT EXPECT THAT THAILAND WILL GIVE US THE BENEFIT OF THE DOUBT THAT ACTIVITIES WHICH ARE OBVIOUSLY IN THE US NATIONAL INTEREST ARE LIKEWISE AUTOMATICALLY IN THE INTEREST OF THE RTG. IF WE DO NOT TAKE GREATER INITIATIVE TO MEET THAILAND'S EXPRESSED DESIRES FOR AID AND TRADE

OPPORTUNITIES TO COOPERATE AND SHARE INFORMATION OF COMMON
VALUE AND TO RELATE OUR OTHER ACTIVITIES TO THAI SECURITY
INTERESTS, WE MAY FIND OURSELVES FORCED TO DISCARD
THE THAI OPTION IN OUR FUTURE STRATEGIC CALCULATIONS.
KINTNER

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